Report to Task and Finish Panel on Register of Development Proposals

Date of meeting: 18 October 2005

Subject: Establishment of Register for Local Concerns

Member contact for further information: Councillor F Maclaine

Committee Secretary: Z Folley (ext 4532)

Recommendations:

(1)   That a formal means of registering matters of concern affecting the Wards in the District be adopted;

(2)   That the means of registering such matters with the Council be done by means of a specific Form (Appendix 1);

(3)   That each Registration is numbered to facilitate a trace of action/decision taken by the Council, and

(4)   To provide a record of outstanding issues affecting a Ward.

Report

1.   Over the years there has been a marked tendency for certain issues of concern in a Ward to 'suffer slippage'. This is to be expected given the scale of priorities. What is not acceptable is that such issues should 'disappear' and fail to be accounted for in successive Work Programmes. The perception is that each Financial Year starts afresh and issues have to be repeated.

2.   The effects of these 'omissions' have the effect of distorting budgetary considerations and compound the problems of their resolution. It also gives the Public a distorted perception of the Council's Administration.

3.   A very important factor in this regard is the Government's directive to implement Electronic Government. **Requirement 7** states:

   Online public reporting/applications, procurement and tracking of environmental services, includes waste management and street scene (e.g. abandoned cars, graffiti removal, bulky waste removal, recycling)

4.   This may result in substantial increase in demand which will impact on Administrative operations and Budget provisions.

Options Considered

5.   Since implementation of **Requirement 7** will not be resolved until 2006 the Panel is not able to issue guidance on how the Registry might operate.

6.   In spite of this limitation, it is felt that a **manual** Registry 'system', utilising a specific Report Form, should be put into operation as soon as possible.

7.   The system will easily convert to e - Government once the technology is brought on stream and facilitate Member search/submission online.

8.   Operation of such a 'system' will assist in better determining budgetary demands in the future.

Reasons for Recommendation

9.   It is essential that Ward Members are able to demonstrate to their constituents that issues of concern, ranging from highway matters to environmental issues, have been properly addressed.

10.   Implementation of e - Government will lead to the Public being able to monitor progress of such issues in the future.

11.   In addition it is important that such matters continue to feature in Annual Work Programmes until they have reached resolution.

Community Impact

12.   Ward Residents feel that the Council disregards matters that impact on the quality of their environment. The introduction of Requirement 7 will significantly empower the Public to register their concerns, and the Council needs to be ready to account for it.

Resource Implications

13.   Unable to quantify at the present time, but unlikely to be significant.

Wards affected   All Epping Forest

Corporate Objectives

14   To be able to demonstrate to Ward Residents that issues of concern have been properly lodged with the Council for assessment and consideration.

15.   To ensure that issues outstanding at the end of each Financial Year are carried forward for inclusion in the Annual Work Programme of each succeeding year.

16.   To facilitate the on-line integration of reporting matters of concern by members of the Public under the Government's Electronic Government proposals (see Para 3.3).